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PROGRAMME PLANNING

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Elaboration of regulations for the planning, programming and  
evaluation cycle of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Elaboration of regulations for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle of the United Nations" (JIU/REP/82/10).

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\* A/37/150.

REPORT ON THE ELABORATION OF REGULATIONS  
FOR THE PLANNING, PROGRAMMING AND EVALUATION CYCLE  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

by  
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CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
Preliminary remarks		
<u>Chapter I</u>		
<u>The problem : an unsatisfactory situation for instituting the reform</u>		1 - 32
1. The basic elements of the problem	3	1 - 3
2. A planning-programming-evaluation system or a system for reflection and organization	3	4 - 9
3. The present situation	5	10 - 21
4. The causes of the situation	8	22 - 32
<u>Chapter II</u>		
<u>The specific characteristics of United Nations programmes and activities</u>	11	33 - 69
1. The seven types of programmes	11	34 - 41
2. The conditions for reflection : the distinction to be made between three categories of programmes	13	42 - 69
<u>Chapter III</u>		
<u>The basic outline of regulations adapted to needs</u>	21	70 - 94
1. The conditions for reflection : improved integration of the evaluation exercises into the planning-programming-evaluation system	21	71 - 77
2. Changes to be made to the present design of the planning instruments in the interests of the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States	23	78 - 89
3. Possibility of a preamble to the regulations	26	90 - 93
4. Possibility of organizing a consultation within the Secretariat	28	94
<u>Chapter IV</u>		
<u>Summary of conclusions and recommendations</u>	29	95 - 97
<u>Annex : Breakdown of the major programmes of the United Nations into programmes and subprogrammes; number of Professional staff members assigned to them.</u>	31	

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

In the report on its twenty-second session (A/37/38, chap. II, D), the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination requested the Joint Inspection Unit to prepare a report to assist the General Assembly in its consideration of the item concerning the draft regulations governing the planning cycle. This document is the response to that request.

The draft regulations themselves were prepared by the Secretary-General (A/37/206) pursuant to paragraph I, 2 (a) of General Assembly resolution 36/228, which requested the Secretary-General to present proposals "enabling it to adopt official rules and regulations". The resolution thus approved recommendation No. 1 contained in JIU report JIU/REP/82/7.

JIU has taken an active part in the adoption of various reforms in connection with the planning-programming-evaluation cycle, for it has produced :

Five reports\* on planning and programming issues :

"Programming and budgets in the United Nations family of organizations" (1969);  
"Medium-term planning in the United Nations system" (1974);  
"Programming and evaluation in the United Nations" (1978);  
"Medium-term planning in the United Nations" (1979);  
"The setting of priorities and the identification of obsolete activities in the United Nations" (1981); and

Five reports\*\* on evaluation issues :

"Evaluation in the United Nations system" (1977);  
"Glossary of evaluation terms" (1978);  
"Initial guidelines for internal evaluation systems of United Nations organizations" (1979);  
"Status of internal evaluation in the United Nations system organizations" (1981);  
"Second report on evaluation in the United Nations system" (1981).

Further to discussions in CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, important resolutions of the General Assembly established the outlines of the regulations governing the Medium-term Plan, the Introduction thereto, the programme budget and the monitoring and evaluation methods : more particularly, resolutions 31/93, 31/99, 32/197, 32/206, 33/118, 34/224, 35/9 and 36/228.

The draft regulations taken into account in this report are those which were considered and amended by CPC in the report on the work of its twenty-second session and are an attempt to codify most of the above-mentioned resolutions.

The conditions under which this report has been prepared have not enabled the author to ascertain the latest stage reached in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the rules or the final draft it is to contain. Contacts have been maintained with the Secretariat throughout the preparation of the present report.

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\* Documents A/7822, A/9646, A/33/226, A/34/84 and A/36/171.

\*\* Documents A/33/225, A/34/286, A/34/271, A/36/181 and A/36/182.

Chapter I

The problem : An unsatisfactory situation  
for instituting the reform

1. The basic elements of the problem

1. For some 15 years, the United Nations has been concerned to plan, programme and evaluate its activities, something which is much more than an attempt to modernize its management. The Secretariat and the delegations of Member States have thus displayed the will to devise a set of methods for constantly increasing the effectiveness of the Organization in its diverse fields of action.

2. This is an impressive aim and the extensive efforts made throughout this period reflect a genuine determination to secure reform and improvements. One could even say obstinacy, since these problems have regularly been discussed every year both in CPC and in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, with the result that a range of important measures have been taken to achieve overall reform of the Organization's decision-making and working methods. It is possible to cite, inter alia, the adoption of the reform in the presentation of the budget (biennial programme budgets) in 1972 <sup>1/</sup>, the introduction of medium-term planning (the first plan was presented in 1974), the gradual establishment of evaluation services since 1978, followed by a large number of measures aimed at refining the instruments created in this way.

3. Yet, at the very time when all these efforts should be crowned by the decision to issue regulations codifying the overall methodology for the planning, programming and evaluation cycle, the conditions in which the proposed 1984-1989 Medium-Term Plan and the Introduction thereto have been presented and, more generally speaking, the current conditions for carrying through the reform, seem to show that this methodology, devised with such patience, is neither properly understood nor properly applied and the proposed objectives have not been achieved. The design and the utilization of the various instruments in existence, not only the Plan and the Introduction, but also the programme budget, the programme performance report and the evaluation exercises, are so different from what they ought to be that, before moving on to regulations, it has become essential to reflect on the reasons for this situation and try to remedy them. The very exercise of elaborating the regulations and the rules should itself afford the right opportunity.

2. A planning-programming-evaluation system or a system for reflection and organization

4. The planning of the activities of an international organization cannot have the same scope or significance as planning in a national context. In both instances, the aim is indeed to try to make forecasts and plan accordingly. National planning, however, relates primarily to investment programmes, whereas an international organization is engaged in support for negotiations, studies, research, technical co-operation, matters which, unlike the construction of roads, buildings or dams, do not lend themselves so easily to accurate programming. The purpose of a planning-programming-evaluation system for the United Nations is to fulfil two fundamental objectives :

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<sup>1/</sup> Resolution 3043 (XXVII) of 19 December 1972.

- it must allow for periodic reflection on the results achieved and the directions that future activities are to take,
- it must make for the greatest possible degree of rationalization in the organization of the work.

5. Arrangements for reflection on the Organization's orientations and on its methods of work are all the more necessary in that the great difficulty of the tasks assigned to it and the constraints imposed on it, more particularly its meagre resources, naturally lead to unsound practices such as :

- verbalism, that is to say, vagueness and grandiloquence in an attempt to mask the lack of realism of ambitions that are expressed in an abundance of words and do not square with the opportunities for extremely limited concrete achievements,
- confusion, frequently caused by the programme presentation, regarding the tasks assigned to the various actors (Member States or the Secretariat of the Organization, in particular).

6. Reflection on future directions and on the methods of work is doubtless something spontaneous and continuous in terms of the individual, but in order to be able to compare the results of such reflection, draw lessons for the future and reach agreement on the requisite changes, it is essential to arrange and programme exercises in reflection on a collective basis. There is no system that allows for the necessary time, and daily tasks, demands and constraints of all kinds take up the time and energy of the members of the Secretariat and of delegations.

7. The establishment of a thorough review of all the Organization's programmes every six years is clearly suited to the problems that arise and the review should, for Member States and for the Secretariat, be as important as, for example, the elaboration of the international development strategy every ten years. This is not the case at the present time.

8. The second objective of a planning system - rational organization of the work - can be achieved by well known methods which consist chiefly in :

- clearly identifying the objectives,
- devising strategies to achieve them,
- establishing a proper management framework which will provide each executant with work plans and timetables,
- monitoring the execution of the work plans and programmes.

Utilization of these conventional techniques none the less calls for activities which can be forecast in advance with a reasonable degree of accuracy. This is not always the case with regard to the activities of the United Nations.

9. The various instruments that have been worked out by continual efforts ought to meet these two basic objectives :

- reflection : the Medium-Term Plan, the Introduction to the Plan, the evaluation exercises,
- organization of the work : the programme budget, the detailed work programmes in each unit, the monitoring system that results in the programme performance report.

Each of the instruments has a precise role which should, if properly played, make for sound functioning of the planning-programming-evaluation system as a whole.

### 3. The present situation

10. Unfortunately, these results have not yet been achieved. Progress has been made, more particularly with regard to the design and the presentation of the programme budget. Some progress, which is still far from enough but could none the less be underpinned by further effort, has also been made in connection with the performance report and a start has been made on developing internal evaluation methods. More important, perhaps, the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination, thanks to the gradual increase in the duration of its sessions, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly have become used to considering the Organization's programme as a whole, despite the imperfect tools used for describing it. Generally speaking, the delegations of Member States display great interest in this exercise in reflection and thinking things over.

11. On the other hand, the deficiencies that remain are serious. To begin with, the Medium-Term Plan, as proposed for the period 1984-1989, is not a suitable aid for reflection. Despite successive endeavours regarding methodology, the current planning exercise produces results which do not correspond to the hopes placed in it and its conception has to be thought out again. The situation can be summed up by stating that, instead of a means for perfecting the programme, we have a sort of "six-year programme budget" drafted in vague terms and tedious into the bargain. The author of the present report, who has followed all the discussions in CPC in connection with the Medium-Term Plan, considers that the presentation of most of the programmes has failed to meet either the real needs of delegations or the objectives of the planning discipline.

12. The major defects in the current proposed Medium-Term Plan lie, first of all, in the standardized presentation of all types of programmes or activities. The form required for drafting the passages explaining the subprogrammes (legislative authority, objectives, problems addressed, situation in 1983, strategy for the period 1984-1989, evaluation) is not really suited to certain types of activities. For instance, to use it in the case of subprogramme 5 of programme 1 in the major programme on international justice and law, a subprogramme which is entitled "Administrative and secretariat services for the Administrative Tribunal", in effect, boils down to stating that "the objective of this subprogramme is to hear and pass judgement upon...", that the problem addressed is "allegations by staff members of the Secretariat", and the strategy for the period 1984-1989 is that the "Tribunal is expected to hold two sessions a year". This is but one example among many, since the use of a standard formula for both administrative management activities and continuous activities is quite unsuitable.

13. The style used in drafting the various chapters of the Plan also reveals that this exercise has not been taken seriously by many of those requested to engage in it. The fact that many "strategies" consist largely of a statement that "the Secretariat will continue, as required, to study and report on various aspects of these problems to the various competent intergovernmental organs..." shows that the exercise has led to no reflection on strategy, either because reflection has not been possible at this level or because there has been a refusal to think things over. Vague, routine formulas fill up entire paragraphs. We find: "The devising of special measures will increasingly call for collaboration, not only with Governments of recipient countries, but also with potential donors of voluntary contributions..."; "assistance will continue to be provided in identifying priority areas for... so as to permit the formulation of appropriate plans and policies": "information will continue to be provided on..., to help the developing countries to..., to prepare and distribute publications highlighting the problems, options and strategies... etc.": "issue-oriented in-depth studies at both national and regional levels will be undertaken...". It would be possible to work out the percentage of the volume of descriptions filled in this way with vague formulas. For many programmes, it would easily stand at 100 per cent, since they often consist of accumulations of

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commonplaces about the "internal and external constraints facing developing countries", "the challenge confronting the international community", the "United Nations contribution to the international development strategy" or "the vital nature of development of the... sector, since growth in other sectors hinges on it". Too many passages in the Medium-Term Plan are thus swamped in a flood of verbalism that this exercise was, in fact, designed to eliminate.

14. This matter of form also reveals that the plan preparation process does not make it possible to ask questions which really have any connection with the effectiveness of the departments. A large majority of the narratives do not explain the reasons behind the choices made for the types of subprogrammes and for the types of activities. When the very purpose of the exercise should be to explain why, in view of the modest resources available, the programmes are limited to specific tasks which are deemed to be the most useful, we none the less find passages which seek to convey the impression that everything can be done at the same time. The lack of precision in substance thus matches the lack of precision in form. It should also be added that the Plan affords no description of activities financed from extrabudgetary funds, which are known to account for approximately 50 per cent of the total amount of resources available to the Organization. This fact even further reduces the scope of the exercise. Again, as CPC remarks in paragraph 60 of its report, "the presentation of the financial indications contained in the proposed medium-term plan was not in accordance with the request made by the General Assembly in resolution 34/224".

15. One particular circumstance made the situation even worse. The instructions for preparing the Plan, as set out by the Director-General, had arranged that the programme descriptions should follow a presentation comprising :

- in the case of the major programmes (plan form 1) : (a) The international development strategy for the sector; (b) The contribution by the United Nations to the strategy,
- in the case of programmes (plan form 2) : (a) General orientation of the programme; (b) Description of the subprogrammes; (c) Organization; (d) Co-ordination,
- in the case of the subprogrammes (plan form 3) : (a) The legislative authority; (b) Objective; (c) Problem addressed; (d) Strategy : (i) situation at the end of 1983, (ii) the period 1984-1989; (e) Evaluation.

16. Nevertheless, in all the final texts submitted to CPC, the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly, three important paragraphs have been eliminated, namely :

- paragraph (a) "General orientation of the programme";
- paragraphs (d) (i) situation by the end of 1983, and (e) Evaluation, in the narratives for the subprogrammes.

The only explanation we have been given for this decision was that the document containing the Medium-Term Plan was too long and could thus be cut down. We cannot but regret a decision which has meant :

- the submission of two different documents to the competent intergovernmental organs (e.g., on the one hand, to the Industrial Development Board in the case of UNIDO or the Trade and Development Board in the case of UNCTAD, and on the other, to CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly; and

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- above all, the second document has thus been rendered more barren and difficult to comprehend 2/.

The fact that it has been possible to take such a decision demonstrates that serious misunderstandings still exist in the Secretariat with regard to the significance attached to the preparation of "the principal policy directive of the United Nations".

17. The content of the document containing the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan also shows that within the Secretariat, the potential of this instrument has not yet been fully grasped. CPC, in paragraphs 51 to 62 of its latest report, took the following view on the document in question: "The Committee felt that the introduction to the plan should have taken a forward-looking and prospective approach, with analyses of various development questions. Instead, it was vague and declaratory in nature and did not lead to a global and intersectoral plan which defined the role of the individual United Nations entities. The plan should have started by taking stock of the present situation, with the help of other organizations, and should then have projected a vision or strategy for the future". In fact, the document submitted is conceived as a "report on the work of the Organization" of the type submitted each year by the Secretary-General, rather than an instrument which, under proposed regulation 3.7, should "highlight... the policy orientations of the United Nations system, indicate the medium-term objectives and strategy..." and "contain the Secretary-General's proposals on priorities". This situation may be explained, at least in part, by particular difficulties which have been encountered. It remains, however, that instead of being a purely descriptive document that looks to the past, it would be desirable that the Introduction be an intellectually innovative instrument that looks to the future.

18. The programme budget, on the other hand, is definitely the instrument that has made the greatest advances, for in the case of most programmes it now makes for reasonably satisfactory identification of the list of "outputs" to be achieved over the biennial budgetary period; it allows detailed work plans to be prepared for all units; and lastly, it makes for proper monitoring of programme execution. The few lacunae that still remain in the presentation should be filled in the near future, notably by applying proposed regulation 4.4, which specifies that the "users" of the outputs should be mentioned.

19. For all that, this instrument is still not being used rationally for programming needs. First, the Introduction to the programme budget is still conceived in the traditional spirit as a budget by type of expenditure and does not provide an explanation of the extent to which the proposed programme budget covers a segment of the Plan. Second, the check on budget execution is aimed almost exclusively at verification of the use of allotments by type of expenditure and not at programme execution. Since the latter remains virtually inoperative until such time as the monitoring unit requested by the General Assembly and already assumed by draft regulation 5.1 to be in existence has been established, the checks on the use by programme managers of their allotments are identical to those that existed before the reform in the budget presentation.

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2/ A detailed comparison we have made between the document submitted to the Trade and Development Board and the document submitted to CPC for major programme 16, UNCTAD, has shown that these truncations have deprived CPC, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the most interesting narratives, for example, in the case of the commodities programme or of the manufactures programme; in some instances, the passages mutilated in this way became quite difficult to understand.

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20. Lastly, in the case of the evaluation exercises by the United Nations itself, the results of the past few years are still rather poor for the moment. Noteworthy efforts have been made, more particularly by the small evaluation unit established in the Office for Programme Planning and Co-ordination. UNHCR and UNIDO have established evaluation units and begun to take effective action in this field. But, the encouragements given to these efforts have not been strong : the resources have remained inadequate and the mandates imprecise; no over-all plan or system has yet been worked out. There is still no central evaluation unit competent for all programmes or any small evaluation unit for the major departments of the United Nations. Self-evaluation has not yet been encouraged or arranged. The use made of the findings of the few evaluation exercises that have been carried out is disappointing.

21. The present situation regarding the planning-programming-evaluation system could be summed up as follows :

- the conception that emerges from the resolutions of the General Assembly is close to that of a system which would enable the Organization steadily to increase its effectiveness,
- but the implementation of these resolutions at the present time still has a long way to go to reach this ambitious objective.

Such a situation has to be explained.

#### 4. The causes of the situation

22. This situation is attributable, at least in part, to the fact that the arrangements for the reform are far from complete. Some tools are still missing, such as the establishment of the monitoring unit which the General Assembly has none the less formally requested; the evaluation machinery has only made a start...etc. But this is not the basic reason for the failures noted. Rather, it is to be found in the fact that the objectives of the reform are neither understood, nor accepted by a large number of those who are called upon to carry it through.

23. It is the reasons for this lack of understanding that have to be scrutinized; they appear to lie :

- first, in a shift in the utilization of the planning and programming instruments towards authority, constraint and control, instead of inducement to engage in reflection and dialogue,
- again, in a tendency to regulate on types of programmes and activities in a uniform manner, even though they display fundamental differences,
- lastly, and more generally speaking, in an overestimation of the notion of forecasting at the expense of the notion of reflection.

24. The authoritarian approach, can be seen first of all in the fact that the Plan is regarded as simply a translation, in administrative terms, of existing legislative mandates. A misunderstanding seems to lie at the root of this approach and it leads to the contradictions that emerge in the present formulation of the draft regulations.

On the one hand, proposed regulations 2.2 and 3.2 cast the Plan as "a translation of legislative mandates into programmes". On the other, the Secretary-General simply presents a draft Medium-Term Plan which, in order to become "the principal policy directive of the United Nations", has to be approved, adopted (and often amended, as experience has shown) by the intergovernmental organs and by the

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General Assembly. Yet, the Secretary-General is invited under existing resolutions to take various initiatives, such as identifying the activities he considers obsolete or of marginal use, something which often involves judgement on the mandates under which they were requested, or to make "proposals on priorities" in the Introduction to the Plan (regulation 3.7). The Secretary-General is thus invited to propose changes, either in the interpretation of existing mandates, or in the mandates themselves. Hence, the degree of initiative that is accorded to the Secretary-General in making proposals for change should be more clearly recognized and pinpointed, and better arrangements should be made for the dialogue with Member States on such proposals. The present approach is contradictory, but it shifts the Plan towards a mere "translation", something which does not make for reflection.

25. Furthermore, the Plan is prepared within the Secretariat under budget-type "instructions" accompanied by models to be followed in drafting the submissions by the departments and divisions concerned. The Secretariat units are therefore required to engage in a drafting exercise, normally with short deadlines. Programme managers have only too often been solely concerned by the formal aspect of this additional task, which fact has led them to justify their unit's existence and methods, rather than to reflect on possible improvements. To achieve genuine participation in thorough reflection and a document that is both more interesting and more effective, a quite different approach is needed : creating the time and the conditions for reflection as free as possible from daily constraints, and arranging for the participation of all those concerned. At the present time, these conditions are not fulfilled.

26. Something even more serious is that the instructions impose exclusively one form for the drafting exercises, regardless of the types of programmes involved. This leads to the anomalies we have mentioned in paragraph 12 above and shows that it is difficult to promote collective reflection under unfavourable conditions : this can only lead to scepticism and a lack of co-operation.

27. Lastly, the notion of forecasting holds an exaggerated place in the whole of the exercise. All those taking part in it emphasize that it is difficult to forecast almost nine years ahead what will be done in such complex and changeable fields as those in which the Organization works. Such an assertion is completely true for some fields, but not all of them. Failure to draw the necessary distinction between what is not foreseeable and what can and must be forecast and planned breeds yet more scepticism about the whole of the exercise.

28. The objectives of the reform, in these circumstances, have been neither understood, nor accepted by most of the heads of service responsible for programme implementation. The Inspector's interviews with many of them show that the desire for reflection on a collective basis is there, but the large majority of them take the view that an exercise in reflection should be carried out under quite different conditions.

29. In short, the opportunity of opening a constructive dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States, which was offered by the preparation of the Medium-Term Plan and of its Introduction has not been taken up. The United Nations Secretariat, as a whole, has acquired habits of extreme caution that have caused it to lose almost all its capacity for making proposals, something which should indeed be one of its main functions. The situation is very different in other organizations, where the secretariats continuously make use of their capacity for taking initiatives and making proposals. It may be difficult to shake off such habits in the United Nations. Nevertheless, the utmost should be done to turn this atmosphere of extreme caution into a spirit of dialogue, and Member States themselves could well help to enhance the Secretariat's proposal-making capacity.

30. As to evaluation, the explanation for the lack of a genuine subsystem integrated into the planning-programming-evaluation system may well be that the importance and the value of the exercise have not yet been properly appraised. Despite the numerous recommendations by JIU and the resolutions of the General Assembly that called for exceptional effort in these areas, resources have remained inadequate and this explains why it has taken a long time to make a start.

31. Finally, the other deficiencies in the system are also due to this reluctance to accept change, which lies both in bureaucratic inflexibility and in the difficulty of realizing the need for a different approach to problems if the Organization's effectiveness is to be genuinely enhanced.

32. Over and above all these reasons, one that is perhaps more important than the others is quite simply the extreme complexity of the United Nations and the fact that it is difficult to gain a proper grasp of the nature of the various programmes whereby the Organization's exceptionally complicated task is translated into activities. Chapter II will therefore seek to give an idea of the specific characteristics of United Nations programmes. A sound understanding of the entire programme can alone make it possible to determine the type of treatment that should be applied for the purposes of reflecting on improvements in departmental effectiveness and for proper organization of the work.

Chapter II

The specific characteristics of  
United Nations programmes and activities

33. Any attempt to adapt to the needs of the Organization a system whose objectives are to reflect on the working methods and improve them must take into account the specific characteristics of the Organization's programmes and activities. The solution is not to apply a theoretical, preconceived system, but to set up machinery suited to the needs. It is therefore essential to determine the particular characteristics of the various types of programmes and activities of the United Nations.

1. The seven types of programmes

34. Whereas most of the specialized agencies have programmes which relate to a single sector of activities (agriculture, health, telecommunications, meteorology, etc.), the activities of the United Nations are highly complex and diversified. The situation in UNESCO (education, the social sciences, the exact sciences, culture, communication), and to a certain extent, in the ILO (since employment and labour issues impinge on all sectors) is fairly comparable to that in the United Nations. However, the United Nations would appear to be the most complex body in the system, a sort of microsystem within the macrosystem. There is no unity in the Organization's programme and at least seven different types of programmes can be distinguished :

35. I. The quest for peace, and more generally, for the satisfactory ordering of international relations

In the present Plan, this comprises three major programmes, six programmes, 20 subprogrammes and employs 187 Professional officers. The major programmes are :

- Political and Security Council affairs,
- Special political affairs,
- Trusteeship and decolonization.

36. II. Establishment of international standards in regard to justice and human rights

This covers two major programmes, six programmes and 25 subprogrammes, and employs 108 Professionals. The two major programmes are :

- International justice and law,
- Human rights.

37. III. Refugees and humanitarian activities

This major programme consists of two programmes : the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and UNRWA, which themselves comprise 10 subprogrammes and have a staff of 473 Professionals (not counting extrabudgetary funds not appearing in the United Nations budget, and in particular, the field staff of UNRWA, which consists of nearly 17,000 persons).

38. IV. Economic and social development

The whole range of United Nations economic and social programmes is again one of great complexity, and its relationship with the economic and social activities of the other agencies in the United Nations system is not very well defined. The following can be differentiated :

(a) Major programmes or programmes of general reflection on economic and social development and of support for negotiations in this connection. These are :

- the programme of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the regional economic commissions, "Development policies and issues" : seven programmes, 30 subprogrammes, 297 Professionals,
- the UNCTAD programme "Money, finance and development" : four subprogrammes, 39 Professionals,
- UNIDO Programme No. 2, "Industrial studies and research", which also includes a subprogramme on "Global and conceptual studies and research" : 11 Professionals,
- finally, the whole of the major programme on statistics may be seen as indispensable support for this exercise in general reflection. It consists of two programmes, 21 subprogrammes and 157 Professionals.

(b) Sectors which are very unequal in terms of the volume of resources assigned to them and consist of the following (including the activities of the regional economic commissions) :

- energy : seven programmes, 18 subprogrammes, 57 Professionals,
- environment : six programmes, 18 subprogrammes, 74 Professionals,
- food and agriculture : six programmes, 13 subprogrammes, 76 Professionals,
- human settlements : six programmes, 25 subprogrammes, 124 Professionals,
- natural resources : seven programmes, 19 subprogrammes, 59 Professionals,
- population : six programmes, 23 subprogrammes 123 Professionals,
- public administration and finance : three programmes, nine subprogrammes, 35 Professionals,
- science and technology : seven programmes, 20 subprogrammes, 54 Professionals,
- social development : five programmes, 20 subprogrammes, 104 Professionals,
- transnational corporations : one programme, three subprogrammes, 50 Professionals,
- transport : seven programmes, 32 subprogrammes, 83 Professionals.

(c) Two sectors, each virtually representing an international organization in size, have to be treated separately in view of their importance and their relative independence. These are :

- international trade (UNCTAD plus regional economic commissions) : 244 Professionals,
- industrial development (UNIDO plus regional economic commissions) : 394 Professionals.

39. V. Two programmes of international co-ordination for the solution of specific problems :

- the major programme on drug abuse (two programmes, seven subprogrammes, 33 Professionals),
- the major programme on disaster relief (one programme, four subprogrammes, 24 Professionals).

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40. VI. The major programme on "Public information" must be classed apart because of its specific objective "to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations". It consists of one programme, four subprogrammes, and it employs 227 Professionals.

41. VII. The functioning of the Organization itself

Inasmuch as the United Nations is an institution whose satisfactory functioning is in itself an important objective for the international community, the "common services" enabling the United Nations to act as a forum for negotiations and to place an efficient Secretariat at the service of the Member States likewise represent programmes which must be constantly improved and kept up to date. The main functions in this respect are :

- conference services : 1,240 Professionals,
- administration, finance and management services : 742 Professionals,
- in all : 1,982 Professionals 3/.

2. The conditions for reflection : the distinction to be made between three categories of programmes

42. Arranging for reflection on these seven types of programmes means taking account of the characteristics peculiar to each of them. The use of a single formula is obviously not suitable. The one for the current proposed Medium-Term Plan, that of drawing up "strategies" at subprogramme level only, is particularly inappropriate. Nor is it particularly surprising that these paragraphs do not provide much interesting information or give serious food for thought.

The need to make choices at different levels

43. What has to be done, in fact, is to choose the types of programmes and activities most likely to enable the Organization to achieve its aims. But the choices to be made do not lie at the same level for the various spheres of action enumerated above.

44. The need to make a choice between various approaches in order to build effective programmes should be evident to all those whose task it is to design and manage the Organization's programmes. The most widespread tendency, unfortunately, is to take the opposite direction, as if everyone was trying to cover every possible aspect of all sectors of activities, even when it is obvious that the resources available do not allow this to be done properly. This leads to a lack of realism which verbalism can hardly conceal.

45. A very large number of examples of this tendency could be given, and the proposed Medium-Term Plan has at least had the virtue of spotlighting them, even if it has not been able to dispose of them. If, for example, we look at "Transport" in chapter 24, in the four pages on programme 1 "Transport development" and on its single subprogramme "Global perspectives on transport development", we see that to "overcome the bottlenecks and constraints of transport and communication facing the developing countries, to identify critical issues and to foster and promote co-operation and co-ordination... in the United Nations system, to monitor and re-

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3/ The figures for Professional staff in these last two "major programmes" have been obtained by the writer of this report from the budget manning tables for 1982-1983, taking into account the various duty stations and the staff paid out of extra-budgetary funds. This method may be different from that used by the authors of the proposed Medium-Term Plan in calculating the number of Professionals for the substantive programmes.

view the progress... by Governments, to provide information on new transport technologies and institutional issues of global interest, to prepare reports and in-depth studies, to examine periodically the requirements of the least-developed countries", etc., the administrative unit in the Secretariat responsible for these tasks has one single Professional staff member (chap. 24, paragraph 24.16 of the proposed Medium-Term Plan for 1984-1989).

46. This is an extreme example, but a comparison of the lists of ambitious objectives we find in a large number of programmes and subprogrammes (ongoing assistance to Governments for updating their legislation, support for technical co-operation activities, in-depth studies and research, collection and dissemination of information, organization of seminars, etc.,) with a staff strength often varying between one and three Professionals does not make it possible to believe that serious results can be achieved in this way.

47. Yet a simple statistical calculation (see annex) shows that, for example, in the regional subprogrammes concerned with energy, the average number of staff is 2.4 Professionals, for human settlements : 2 Professionals and for social development : 2.3 Professionals. These figures might make sense for subprogrammes with modest though precise achievements in mind, for example, in this type of programme, either a series of specific studies, or the creation of a given type of institution, or the conclusion of an agreement, or a training programme. These are objectives which could be set on the basis of a particular timetable; but all of these objectives cannot be tackled together without any time schedule, as is generally the case.

The necessary distinction between plannable, partly plannable and unplannable activities

48. Actually, to make choices and explain the reasons for the choices is the only way of acting realistically and therefore effectively. But the options are altogether different, depending on the type of programme. For example, the thinking process is not the same when the activities to be defined are foreseeable in advance, and hence plannable, as when their nature is such that they cannot be either foreseen or planned. In the past, JIU has argued time and time again that a distinction should be made between activities which can be planned and those which can not (cf. for example, Recommendation 2 of the report on medium-term planning in the United Nations, (A/34/84, paragraphs 41-44). The present format of the Plan, which applies the same framework of presentation and thinking to all branches of activity and all types of programmes does not take account of this fundamental factor; hence it is no surprise that it does not form an instrument for reflection.

49. The distinction between three categories of activities - plannable, partly plannable, and unplannable - depends both on their nature and on the degree of consensus they command among Member States :

- differences in nature : for example, joint action programmes among Member States (studies and research, establishment of institutions, training of specialists, dissemination of approved standards, etc.,) can afford choices between various types or modes of action in a way that programmes of straightforward administrative management, consisting basically of continuous functions (recruitment, budgeting, accountancy, etc.,) can not,
- differences in degree of consensus : when the level of consensus is reasonable, the issues involved are those on which it is relatively easy to organize an action plan or programmes, and the thinking must be concentrated on the best way of dealing with them. On the other hand, when the gap between Member States is wide and the Organization's task, which obviously is to try to bring them closer, is particularly difficult, the issues involved are those for which it is extremely awkward to design plans.

50. The combination of these two criteria suggests the following classification :

- unplannable activities : support for negotiations or identification of the conceptual framework for such negotiations (among the seven types of programmes described in paragraphs 34 to 41 above, the following should be classed under this heading : type I : Quest for peace; a large part of type II : International standards in regard to justice and human rights; type IV (a) : General reflection on economic and social development; and type IV (c) : International trade negotiations),
- activities which can be planned only in the terms of reform or possible improvement : these would include management or continuous-function activities (type VII : Functioning of the Organization itself; type III : Refugees and humanitarian activities),
- plannable activities : joint action by the international community commanding a reasonable degree of consensus (type IV (b) and (c), excluding international trade negotiations, aid and research for the development of specific sectors, and type V : International co-ordination for the solution of specific problems).

The classification suggested takes account only of the major aspect of each of the programmes. Subtle changes would have to be made to take account of the fact that a single programme may include activities with a bearing on all three categories.

51. This distinction has consequences both for the planning approach and for the evaluation approach. In the paragraphs below, we shall try to show, in a more precise manner, that for each of these categories the levels of reflection on strategy (i.e. the types of choice to be made) should be different and that the evaluation methods can not be the same.

How to organize reflection in the areas where planning is not possible : support for negotiations

52. The areas where it is essential to engage in reflection on the broadest terms and to challenge the very concept of the role of the Organization are those where there is very little consensus among Member States. These areas might include the following :

- the quest for peace and security,
- co-ordination at the level of the United Nations system,
- studies and research on development concepts,
- negotiations on the principles and rules concerning international trade,
- definition of standards in regard to international justice or human rights.

Here, we simply give examples from the first two.

An example from the quest for peace

53. This is the Organization's most important area and the one on which it is judged by public opinion in all countries, the one where its effectiveness is most seriously challenged and where it may be thought that increasing its effectiveness would be most desirable. The present make-up of the major programmes mentioned in paragraph 35 above shows that this sphere essentially covers at the present time :

- direct efforts to prevent the outbreak of hostilities or to put an end to existing hostilities as rapidly as possible (support for negotiations in the Security Council, dispatch of missions, military observers or peace-keeping forces). The staff assisting the Secretary-General in his efforts (political and Security Council affairs and special political affairs) consist of 54 Professionals,

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- studies, research and support for negotiations over the longer term : monitoring and forecasting of the trends in the international situation in the field of peace, including security as regards the use of the seas and oceans, efforts to reach agreements on arms limitation and reduction, the peaceful uses of outer space (Department of Political Affairs and Centre for Disarmament); staff strength : 52 Professionals,
- support for negotiations or dissemination of information on questions related to the maintenance of peace : exercise of trusteeship, legal representation of countries not yet independent, completion of decolonization, and action to combat apartheid; staff strength : 71 Professionals.

54. It would seem obvious that in such an area the main level of reflection can not be that of the subprogramme. The only really pertinent questions on the subject of the degree of effectiveness of the Organization would seem to be the following :

- the extent to which the Organization could usefully carry out studies and research on preventing hostilities instead of concentrating all efforts on intervention after the event, and the types of activities that could be envisaged for this purpose,
- the consistency of the efforts at present being made by the Organization in the various allied fields,
- the apparent contradiction between the fact that the quest for peace is the Organization's most important task and the fact that only about 5 per cent of its Professional staff members are assigned to this (187 in all).

55. This type of problem concerning the composition of the Organization's programmes in the area in question can obviously :

- only be described in the Plan in a strategy narrative covering the breakdown of activities into major programmes and either forming part of the joint presentation of the relevant major programmes in the Plan or inserted in the text of the Introduction to the Plan,
- only be evaluated in connection with an exercise in reflection by a high-level outside group of consultants (university professors, researchers, diplomats, eminent political figures) capable of challenging the concept of the United Nations programme in this area, which is so crucial and so difficult.

The area of co-ordination at the level of the United Nations system

56. The problems of the programme aspects that relate to system-wide co-ordination afford another example of reflection at a level upstream from the major programmes themselves. It is quite obvious that the economic and social programmes in the United Nations form only a part of the overall economic and social programmes of the system. Only by historical chance has a particular sector of activity (cf. the list above, paragraph 38 (b) and (c)) been assigned to the United Nations instead of to another agency, or indeed come to be covered by an independent organization. On the other hand, reflection on economic and social issues at the broadest level finds its natural place in the United Nations, although it has been split up among a number of centres for reflection (cf. paragraph 38 (a) above) and co-ordination.

57. Proposed regulation 3.7, concerning the Introduction to the Plan, specifies that it "will constitute a key integral element in the planning process" and "highlight in a co-ordinated manner the policy orientations of the United Nations system"

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precisely because Member States have realized that co-ordination within the system, which is so essential for effectiveness, cannot succeed if it is practised simply through the traditional channel of interagency negotiations on sectors in which they are working at the same time, but an attempt should be made to set things in order at the point when the programmes of the organizations are conceived and shaped.

For this reason, the development of joint planning was requested in General Assembly resolution 32/197, concerning the restructuring of the United Nations system (paragraph 52). The current practices, however, do not seem to fulfil the hopes placed in them.

58. The exercise of preparing the Introduction to the Plan and the Medium-Term Plan itself, in the case of the major programmes and the programmes for broad reflection on economic and social development issues, ought to meet these concerns if the requirements of proposed regulation 3.7 were observed and the strategy narratives were given an appropriate place in the Plan, in other words, at the level of the major programmes or upstream from all the major programmes and programmes dealing with these problems. These descriptions could and should afford the opportunity for a two-fold comparison :

- within the United Nations itself, between the advocates of a particular kind of approach to development, since the consistency of the positions of those who set priority on international trade problems and the advocates of development at the grass roots level is not always absolutely clear,
- in the United Nations system, between the various "world problems" outlined in a number of documents, and more particularly in the introductory documents to the Medium-Term Plans prepared by the various organizations 4/.

59. These two examples show that, in the case of the areas of support for negotiations or of research on their conceptual framework :

- the strategies to be worked out in the Plan must be at the level of the major programmes or upstream from them,
- the evaluation methods should call on high-level external consultants and should be aimed more at the presentation of the conceptual framework than at the results of the day-to-day activities of the departments,
- lastly, the role of the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan should be fundamental for these types of programmes if the Introduction was arranged so as to allow for comparisons between actual programme formulation within the United Nations and in the United Nations system. In this respect, a very precise timetable should be worked out for preparing this document. It would also be useful to envisage an examination of matters of substance concerning the preparation of the Introduction at the annual ACC-CPC meetings.

How to arrange for reflection on activities in areas of joint action on which there is reasonable consensus

60. For the areas in which there is reasonable consensus regarding the Organization's objectives, theoretical reflection should take place at the major programme or the programme level. The idea here is to choose between the various types of subprogrammes. Reflection at this level is essential for the reasons we have set

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4/ The latest document issued by the Director-General of UNESCO as an introduction to the Medium-Term Plan for 1984-1989 is worth noting, since it furnishes an example of an attempt to describe world problems that would have been worth comparing with the approach in the Secretariat of the United Nations. This document has been published in the form of a work entitled "Aux sources du futur".

forth in paragraphs 41 to 44 above and it is almost completely ignored in the format of the current Plan. The "programme orientation" paragraphs, which were not in fact intended to present alternative strategies, have been done away with in the final text. However, if the planning and evaluation exercises are to be meaningful, the main thrust should be brought to bear on this point.

61. The majority of the economic and social programmes (apart from those relating to support for negotiations) fall within this category. They consist largely in :

- assisting the formulation and implementation of national policies in a given sector,
- collecting and disseminating information,
- seeking to co-ordinate national policies in order to solve problems that arise worldwide,
- conducting studies and in-depth research in a particular field,
- assisting the training of specialists on particular problems.

This is true of most of the substantive programmes enumerated in paragraph 38 (b) and (c) and paragraph 39 above.

62. For all these programmes, the practice followed at the present time is in most instances to formulate the subprogrammes by pinpointing the subsectors within a programme. For example, most of the subprogrammes in the transport programme (chapter 24) differentiate between general transport, shipping, land transport, air transport, road transport, rail transport, etc. The statistics programme (chap. 22) pinpoints industrial statistics, energy statistics, price statistics, social statistics, etc., for the subprogrammes. The major programme on social development (chapter 21) is divided into subprogrammes on women, young people, the aged, disabled persons, etc. The UNIDO studies and research programme (chap. 15) differentiates between global studies and research, regional and country studies and research, sectoral studies and research, etc. This method is warranted in some cases (more particularly those in which the coverage and the manpower are such that the subprogrammes are more like a full programme), but it generally leads to confusion. It is definitely not a method of objective-based planning whereby, in a clearly delineated overall framework, each subprogramme is assigned to a precise and properly identified objective. It tallies almost always with the administrative structure of the unit responsible for implementing the programme and thus contradicts proposed regulation 3.6, which states that "The plan shall be presented by programme and not by organizational unit". In this connection, the regulation should perhaps be drafted more clearly by stating : "The plan shall be presented by objective and not by organizational unit". This is what we propose in paragraph 79 below.

63. A medium-term objective, preferably with a particular time-limit, is rarely identified by subprogrammes. Nevertheless, it is possible to cite the transnational corporations programme (chap. 23), which is broken down into three subprogrammes for three precise objectives : the adoption of a code of conduct, enhancing the contribution of transnational corporations to development, and strengthening the capability of host developing countries in dealing with matters related to transnational corporations. The Plan does contain a few other examples of subprogrammes of this type, but for all plannable programmes, a method that will make for systematic objective-based planning is required. Accordingly, the regulations should define more clearly the method of analysis to be followed. Such a method could be to identify, within a single subprogramme in each programme, all the continuous activities which are required to implement it, but do not correspond to a precise time-limited objective (for example, regular collection and dissemination of information,

recurrent publications, etc.), and then identify the time-limited objectives for all the other subprogrammes. Paragraph 83 below gives an indication of the way in which such objectives could be established in the framework of a strategy narrative, and paragraph 84 contains a list of the types of objectives that could be used for time-limited subprogrammes.

64. As to the evaluation exercises for this type of programme, it has to be recognized that the methodology still has to be worked out. The major difficulty in this connection is that the means for determining the programme's impact are inadequate. For example, it is extremely difficult in the case of assistance in national policy-making to discover the opinion of the output users and it is not certain that the users themselves have the facilities for assessing accurately the impact of the various forms of aid they have received from the United Nations. Again, the United Nations itself holds a fairly marginal place in the substantial network of international or national development aid institutions. In order to overcome these difficulties, efforts with regard to methodology are being pursued at the present time and JIU is co-operating in these endeavours. It can already be affirmed, however, that a special effort must be made to identify the users, and later progress depends on success in this respect. Generally speaking, regardless of the form of the evaluation exercises, participation by programme managers should be encouraged at all times.

#### The areas of administrative management and continuous activities

65. The present Plan contains few examples of administrative management activities, which now require to be planned under proposed regulation 3.5. Nevertheless, it can be seen, as pointed out in paragraph 12 in connection with the subprogramme concerning the secretariat for the Administrative Tribunal, that the current formula for the presentation of the Plan is not at all suitable for this kind of activity. A reading of the other programmes relating to management activities (three-quarters of UNHCR activities or all UNRWA activities) reveals that the descriptions add virtually nothing to what can be read in the Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/Organization). It is plain that, for this category of activities, a special method of description in the Plan and an adequate method of evaluation also need to be devised.

66. With regard to the descriptions in the Plan, it is not essential to relinquish the terms "major programme", "programme" and "subprogramme", but it has to be recognized that the present format of narratives for the objectives, the problems addressed and the strategies should be done away with and replaced simply by a brief description of the functions performed, accompanied wherever possible by figures (number of persons recruited each year in the case of the recruitment services, pages translated in the case of the translation services, etc.,) and information on expected changes, the volume and the nature of these activities. On the other hand, it would be quite useful to arrange, for each administrative unit, a separate narrative in the form of a subprogramme which could be termed "description of improvements or reforms envisaged". Modernization and improved performance in the management services is, in fact, an important aspect of enhancing the effectiveness of the Organization, and the reforms lend themselves perfectly well to planning.

67. The evaluation exercises in connection with this kind of activity should also follow a methodology of their own. In the light of the general principles mentioned above, they should more particularly :

- endeavour to measure the performance of the departments in figures, wherever possible,
- identify types of measures and reforms which could improve this performance.

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Subprogramme "strategies"

68. It follows from the above comments that the most important strategy narratives should be set out either upstream from the major programmes themselves or at the level of the major programmes or the programmes in order to explain the choices for the various objectives for each subprogramme. However, a description of strategy or tactics at the subprogramme level is also necessary. But in most cases, when a time-limited objective is properly identified, in the case of the subprogrammes it should be enough to describe the stages envisaged, in other words, to establish a timetable.

Conclusion to Chapter II

69. The findings contained in this chapter could be summed up by stating :

- the seven different types of programmes identified in terms of the type of objective may, for the purpose of the exercises in reflection and organization of the work involved in planning and evaluation, be classed in three different categories, namely, support for negotiations, joint action at the international level when there is some degree of consensus, and administrative management,
- for these three categories, it is always necessary, in terms of the objectives assigned to the Organization, to choose between the most effective means of moving towards those objectives in the light of the scant resources available,
- these choices, however, cannot be made at the same level in the three fields in question and they call for the use of different methods, both in regard to evaluation and to the description of the strategy justifying them.

Chapter III will discuss how the regulations could take account of these findings.

Chapter III

The basic outlines of regulations adapted to needs

70. If the main lines to be followed in order to make the planning-programming-evaluation system a genuine system for reflection and organization suited to the specific characteristics of the programmes and activities of the United Nations are indeed as those described in chapter II, the exercise of establishing the regulations and the rules ought to make it possible to remedy the present situation. In the first place, certain rectifications, amendments or additions should help to define a regulatory framework which is more appropriate and more explicit. At the same time, arrangements for consultations in the Secretariat with the Professional staff members responsible for designing and implementing the programmes could help to ensure that the rules and the regulations are thoroughly understood and accepted, or - at least in the case of the rules - that the observations of those whose duty it is to apply them are taken into account. In the paragraphs below, we shall therefore deal with those regulations which, in our opinion, require better drafting, and we shall indicate the types of rules that would be appropriate for them, stressing in particular :

- the conditions conducive to reflection through the evaluation exercises (proposed regulations 6.1 and 6.2),
- amendments to be made to the existing instruments in the interests of the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States (proposed regulations 3.6, 3.7 and 4.4),
- ways and means of organizing consultations on the rules within the Secretariat.

1. The conditions for reflection : improved integration of the evaluation exercises into the planning-programming-evaluation system 5/

71. As we have seen above, it is difficult to imagine that proper collective reflection on the Organization's programme within the Secretariat could be organized within the narrow limits of a drafting exercise that is carried out on "instructions" and in a short period of time.

A variety of formulae could be envisaged for a more free-ranging type of reflection. In relation to internal and external evaluation exercises, this could include, for example, personal consultation with heads of service by the Secretary-General on their ideas about reforms, or the preparation of consolidated documents on the major programmes with a view to publication, or "in-depth studies" of the type used by other agencies and cited as being useful in our 1979 report (A/34/84, paragraphs 18-23). But in the first place, no such formula can be successful unless sufficient time is set aside to apply it, in other words, unless the outputs relevant to this effort are programmed in the programme budget. Secondly, the formula selected must make it possible to associate the members of the Secretariat and the representatives of Member States in the intellectual exercise. This is why the evaluation exercises seem to be particularly suitable for producing an answer to the problems thus posed. However, it is essential that they should be better integrated into the planning system and that the methods used should be in keeping with the specific characteristics of the Organization's programmes.

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5/ This section of the report has been prepared in collaboration with Inspector Sohm, who is the author of the five reports on evaluation cited in the Preliminary remarks.

72. Accordingly, proposed regulations 6.1 and 6.2 and the corresponding rules, which CPC recommended should elaborate on matters relating to the objectives, nature, methodology and periodicity of evaluations, could be remodelled so as to specify how this improved integration is to be achieved.

73. In the first place, it might be useful to consider recasting the overall plan for the draft regulations so as to place the description of the evaluation, in other words the essential intellectual exercise in reflection, before the description of the Medium-Term Plan and the budget 6/. This change would no doubt be merely symbolic, but it would be significant. It would make it clear that the planning-programming-evaluation system should be first and foremost an exercise in reflection rather than an exercise in drafting.

74. At the same time, it would be useful for the objectives, timetable and methodology of the evaluations to be defined in the regulations. We therefore propose that regulations 6.1 and 6.2 be recast as follows :

Proposed regulation 6.1 7/ : The objective of evaluation exercises is :

- in a general manner, to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives,
- to enable the Secretariat and Member States, in preparing the plan, to engage in wide-ranging reflection with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.

75. Proposed regulation 6.2 : All activities programmed in the plan shall be evaluated over a fixed time period. An evaluation programme and timetable shall be proposed by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly at the same time as the proposed medium-term plan. This programme shall indicate the list of programmes and activities it is felt essential to evaluate before preparing the subsequent plan, the types of evaluation undertaken, the officials responsible for preparing reports, and the procedures for considering, approving and implementing the conclusions drawn. The evaluation programme shall be re-examined every two years, together with the Medium-Term Plan. Participation in the evaluation exercises by the organizational units concerned shall be programmed in the programme budget. The timetable shall be established in such a way that the evaluation of the programmes chosen will be completed by the time the subsequent proposed Medium-Term Plan is drawn up.

76. Proposed regulation 6.3 : Evaluation shall be conducted both internally and externally. The Secretary-General shall develop internal evaluation methods. These methods shall be differentiated to take account of the various types of programmes The General Assembly shall invite such bodies as it sees fit, including the Joint Inspection Unit, to perform ad hoc external evaluations and to report on them.

This regulation should be rounded out by rules dealing with the various methods to be applied to the three main categories of programmes set forth in chapter II of this report.

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6/ This would look as follows : Article III : Evaluation, Article IV : Medium-Term Plan, Article V : Programme aspects of the budget, Article IV : Monitoring of programme implementation.

7/ Or regulations 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, etc., if the suggestion made in paragraph 73 is accepted. The parts underlined are proposed additions or amendments to the text of the draft in the CPC report.

77. Proposed regulation 6.4 : The evaluation results shall be incorporated in subsequent plan and programme design, delivery and policy directives when approved by the competent intergovernmental body. To this end, a brief report summarizing the conclusions which the Secretary-General proposes should be drawn from all the evaluation exercises making up the evaluation programme shall be established and submitted to Member States at the same time as the texts of the proposed Medium-Term Plan and the introduction.

2. Changes to be made to the present design of the planning instruments in the interests of the dialogue between the Secretariat and Member States

78. To take account of the indications given in chapter II concerning the need to deal differently with the description of three categories of activity under the Plan, the role to be played by the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan and the concept of the role of the programme budget, the following amendments are proposed for regulations 3.6, 3.7 and 4.4.

79. Form and substantive content of the Medium-Term Plan - regulation 3.6

It is proposed that the present text of regulation 3.6 should be rounded out and replaced by the following series of regulations :

Proposed regulation 3.6 : The plan shall be presented by objectives 8/ and not by organizational units. It shall identify :

- (a) Major programmes consisting of all activities conducted in a sector,
- (b) Programmes, consisting within a major programme, of all activities in a sector which are under the responsibility of a distinct organizational unit, normally at the division level,
- (c) Subprogrammes, consisting within a programme, of all activities that are directed at the accomplishment of one medium-term objective or several closely related objectives.

80. Proposed regulation 3.6 bis : The plan shall emphasize the description of objectives and strategies. The presentation and format of the analysis provided therein shall vary according to the type and nature of activities. To this end, a distinction shall be made between :

- areas in which the Organization's main task is to facilitate negotiations between Member States. These areas include the quest for peace, the major development schemes, the definition of standards in regard to international justice and human rights, and the organization of international trade,
- the areas of joint action programmes at the international level on which there is a reasonable level of consensus among Member States, such as assistance in defining and implementing national policies, the organization of international co-operation in particular sectors, in-depth studies and research concerning the international community as a whole, the collection and dissemination of information, and the dissemination of norms approved by the General Assembly,

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8/ One further reason for replacing the word "programme" by the work "objective" is that in the text of the existing regulation 3.6 itself, "programme" is defined as corresponding to the activities under the responsibility of an organizational unit.



- the areas of administrative management, either of the Organization or of tasks assigned to the Organization by the General Assembly.

81. Proposed regulation 3.6 ter : For the areas of support for negotiations, strategy narratives shall be drawn up at the level of the area in question, which may encompass more than one major programme. They shall evaluate the progress made up to the time of preparation of the plan in the area in question, analysing the reasons for any failures or for delays in progress, justifying the continuation of action already undertaken, or where appropriate, proposing either that the modalities be changed or that new paths be explored. They shall explain the choices proposed by the Secretary-General between the various solutions possible and the selection of the list of major programmes and programmes proposed under the plan.

For all activities allied to support for negotiations and included in the same programme, but capable of being planned, such as : long-term studies and research, collection and dissemination of information, and joint action on which there is a reasonable level of consensus, the presentation shall comply with the requirements of regulation 3.6 quinquies below.

82. Proposed regulation 3.6 quater : For the areas of administrative management, either of the Organization or of tasks assigned to the Organization by the General Assembly :

- a description of these activities shall be prepared, by programmes and sub-programmes, illustrated if possible by figures on their most characteristic outputs and foreseeable changes in their volume or their nature over the period of the plan,
- a statement shall then summarize the results of the most recent evaluations and indicate the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General to enhance performance or reduce the costs of the functions thus exercised. With regard to plans for reform over the medium-term, an indication shall be given of the main stages envisaged and of the timetable for implementation during the period of the plan.

83. Proposed regulation 3.6 quinquies : For the areas of joint action programmes at international level :

(a) The plan shall present, at the level of the major programmes and the programmes, a reminder of the legislative mandates, a description of the objectives pursued, distinguishing between those of Member States and those of the Secretariat of the Organization, and a narrative of the strategy proposed for attaining those objectives. This strategy narrative shall identify :

- the problems to be solved,
- the background of efforts already made and action undertaken in these fields by Member States, by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system or by other international organizations, and finally by the United Nations itself, up to the date of the drafting of the plan,
- the results of recent evaluations of the activities of the United Nations,
- the various methods which can be envisaged to speed up the solution of problems during the period of the plan and the reasons for the choices proposed by the Secretary-General from among these various methods, in other words, the list of subprogrammes envisaged.

(b) The subprogrammes shall be identified :

- by reserving one of them for a description of all continuous activities (regular collection and dissemination of information, recurrent publications) which appear to be necessary for the proper implementation of the programme,
- by specifying time-limited objectives for each of the others.

84. Rules for regulation 3.6 quinquies above should be drawn up listing the main types of time-limited objectives by categories, for example :

- studies and research : preparation of a series of studies on a particular area; preparation of a series of publications; identification of a stage in research; formation of an institutionalized research system (regional institute, etc.); establishment of an intergovernmental research programme,
- information : establishment of an information system; assessment, on the basis of a given subject, of the level of information for a public identified in terms of its composition and size, with figures,
- training : training of a particular number of specialists to be placed at the service of Member States for the implementation of a policy; establishment of institutions to provide continuous training; a system of aid to enable a particular number of specialists to be trained at national level in a particular number of countries,
- international agreements in areas where the level of consensus among Member States gives reason to hope that they can be concluded during the period of the plan,
- observance by Member States of standards or methods recommended by the General Assembly,
- specific objectives : designing instruments for co-operation in a regional area; conclusion of agreements between Governments on regional objectives of common interests; specific aid to be given to existing regional institutions; formulation of an intergovernmental programme to achieve an objective defined by the international community, etc.

85. It is proposed that the following amendments be made to the existing text of regulation 3.7 on the Introduction to the Medium-Term Plan :

Proposed regulation 3.7 : The Plan shall be preceded by an Introduction which will constitute a key integral element in the planning process and shall :

- highlight in a co-ordinated manner the policy orientations proposed for the activities of the United Nations system in the light of the evolution of world problems, differentiating between the areas of the quest for peace, negotiations on economic and social development, and joint action by the international community on which there is a reasonable degree of consensus.

The rest is to remain unchanged.

86. With regard to the Introduction, the supplementary rules should furnish details concerning :

(a) The method of preparing the Introduction, specifying the tasks to be carried out in this respect by the various units that should be invited to co-operate, and particularly those responsible for reflecting on development conditions;

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(b) The timetable for preparation and discussion, so as to allow for the necessary comparisons, for example, with the large agencies of the United Nations system and between the representatives of the agencies (ACC) and the representatives of Member States, more particularly in CPC,

(c) The content of the Introduction itself, where the Plan should differentiate between the three main areas of activity we propose under regulation 3.7, and explain how the policy orientations of the major programmes derive from the relevant problems.

87. Finally, with regard to the programme budget, the following addition might be made in the regulation 4.4. After the words "and users" and before the sentence beginning "The proposed programme budget", insert a sentence reading :

"The programme budget shall be preceded by a statement explaining the main changes made in the content of the programmes and the volume of resources allocated to them in relation to the previous biennium, indicating the rate of progress envisaged for the implementation of the plan for all of the activities corresponding to time-limited objectives".

88. In particular, there should be a rule explaining how the various categories of output users should be described in the programme budget.

89. Possibility of combining the planning regulations and the financial regulations

There is clearly a direct relationship between an important part of the financial regulations, especially articles II and III, and the planning cycle regulations. An annex to the Secretary-General's report and the CPC report indicates the proposed revisions to the Financial Rules as a result of the adoption of the new regulations. It refers to regulations 3.3, 3.6 and 13.1 of the present Financial Rules. The changes, which involve repeating the same wording in two sets of regulations, at least in part, do not, in fact, seem to cover all the Financial Rules that ought to be concerned. The existing text of these regulations, for example, give the Under Secretary-General for Administration, Finance and Management, the entire responsibility for preparing the programme budget, making no mention of the role of the Director-General for Development. At the same time, the present provisions perpetuate the spirit of budget management by type of expenditure and do not, in any way, reflect the programme aspect of the programme budget. Finally, the style in which the two sets of regulations are drafted differs considerably. For all these reasons, it would be decidedly useful to examine how these two sets of regulations could be combined.

3. Possibility of a preamble to the regulations

90. The draft proposed by the Secretariat has no preamble. The objectives of the planning cycle are described very soberly in regulation 2.2, which reads as follows :

"The planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation cycle shall form an integral part of the general policy-making and management process of the Organization. The above instruments shall be used to ensure that activities are co-ordinated and that available resources are utilized according to legislative intent and in the most effective and economic manner".

91. This description is only partly correct, and it is inadequate to define the objectives of those who have perseveringly undertaken and pursued efforts to establish this methodology. In particular, it does not bring out the inherent role of the various instruments, and it appears to imply that the only goal of the Medium-Term Plan is to help with co-ordination and the strict observance of the legislative mandates, in line with a narrow "budgetary" concept of the role of the Plan entirely

Division  
of  
General  
Assembly  
Affairs

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

A/37/416-  
A/37/476

1982

VIII

at variance with that of broad reflection on and querying of methods as advocated in this report. Nor does it do justice to the role of the Secretary-General and his powers of initiative.

92. It is therefore important that the objectives should be as explicit as possible, particularly if the discipline of the planning cycle is not to appear to those responsible for its implementation as a mere straitjacket, a bureaucratic device imposed from outside, and a superfluous system of control to be evaded at all costs. A preamble would act as a constant reminder, to all those engaged in carrying out the planning, of the rationale behind the efforts asked of them.

93. The text of this preamble might be worded as follows :

Because of their worldwide dimensions and bearing in mind the limited means allocated for them, the problems which the United Nations is called upon to help to solve present specific difficulties and risks, in particular, the risk of defining objectives which are too numerous or too ambitious in relation to the means available, the risk of replacing actions by words, the risk of becoming bogged down in routine, following blind alleys, etc.

The essential objectives of the discipline of the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and the evaluation cycle are to enable the difficulties to be surmounted and to reduce the risks to a minimum. The aim is :

- To subject the whole of the Organization's programmes to periodic reviews, which should be as thorough as possible,
- to afford an opportunity for reflection before choices have to be made among the various types of action possible, in the light of existing constraints,
- to associate in such reflection all those participating in action by the Organization, and especially representatives of the delegations and of the Secretariat,
- to assess what is feasible and to define reasonable objectives politically acceptable to Member States as a whole,
- to translate the choices neatly into concrete objectives, clear-cut programmes and work plans specifying the tasks of each executant,
- to make instruments available for monitoring the execution and verifying the effectiveness of the work done,
- to assess regularly whether the results obtained confirm the validity of the orientations chosen and to draw lessons from their success or failure with a view to proper reshaping of the Organization's programmes.

The main instruments that can be used to achieve these objectives are :

- the evaluation system, as an aid to continuous reflection and to the formulation of subsequent plans,
- the introduction to the Medium-Term Plan and the Medium-Term Plan itself, which should enable decisive choices to be made among the various possible orientations,
- the programme budget and the programme performance report, which should make it possible to establish precise work plans and monitor implementation thereof.

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The rigorous discipline involved in the use of these main instruments requires, on the part of those who undertake it, a continuous effort warranted by steady improvement in the effectiveness of the Organization in all areas.

4. Possibility of organizing a consultation within the Secretariat

94. The draft regulations reviewed by CPC, the Secretary-General's report and the draft rules it contains, together with the present report by JIU, provide the General Assembly with a large number of elements which can be helpful to it in preparing a final set of regulations for the planning-programming-evaluation cycle. An examination of the dossier drawn up in this way should enable the General Assembly to take a decision on the main orientations for the regulations and the accompanying rules. However, as indicated in paragraphs 24 and 25 above, one of the main reasons for the present unsatisfactory situation is the authoritarian attitude underlying the existing regulations, and as suggested in paragraph 70, it would be useful for the Secretariat officials, whose task it will be to implement the new regulations, to be consulted on the subject of the design and formulation of the rules. If such a consultation is to be of any use, it will take time and it is therefore proposed that the General Assembly should consider :

- adopting at the present (thirty-seventh) session a set of regulations to be applied as soon as it is approved,
- requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a set of rules taking account of any amendments adopted by the General Assembly at the present session, and to consult all programme managers about this set of rules,
- reviewing the text of the regulations and rules at the thirty-eighth session, and taking into account, if appropriate, the results of the consultation requested.

The consultation might consist in sending to those responsible for the various programmes the documents referred to above, together with the recommendations of the General Assembly itself, and requesting that they make any suggestions or changes they see fit in connection with the text of the rules. This consultation might be accompanied by in-depth research on at least three important problems which have not yet received as precise an answer as might be wished, namely :

- identification of the users and networks of users of the outputs of the various programmes,
- definition of the objectives of time-limited subprogrammes,
- methodology for the evaluation of the various types of programmes.

JIU would be happy to contribute to this research. A report by the Secretary-General might be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session summarizing the replies received from programme managers.

Chapter IV

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

95. The present report might be summed up in a few sentences as follows :

The present conception of the planning-programming-evaluation cycle, as described in General Assembly resolutions and in the documents approved in those resolutions (for example, several reports by CPC and recommendations by JIU) has reached a considerable level of precision which requires only a few touches and additions to provide the Organization with an instrument for constantly improving its effectiveness. On the other hand, this system is at the moment neither properly understood, nor satisfactorily applied. It is therefore essential, at a time when the regulations and the rules are to be studied and approved by the General Assembly with a view to codifying the methodology for the entire planning-programming-evaluation cycle :

- to examine how the present draft regulations can be put into shape, supplemented and elucidated in order to make them more readily applicable, and
- to consult those whose task it will be to apply the regulations, giving them full information on the true objectives of the reforms and asking for their views on the design and formulation of the regulations.

96. The review and elucidation of the regulations should focus particularly on :

- the distinction to be made between three different fields of activity : support for negotiations, joint action on matters on which there is a certain degree of consensus among the Member States, and administrative management,
- adaptation of the evaluation exercises to these different categories of activities and integrating them, as the central exercise in reflection, into the timetable for the preparation of the Medium-Term Plan and the Introduction thereto,
- adaptation of the presentation of the Medium-Term Plan for these three types of activities, in matters pertaining to the design of the strategy narratives and the level at which they should be placed and identification of time-limited objectives in each subprogramme.

97. Consequently, the main recommendations made in the present report are as follows :

Recommendation No. 1 : The possibility of replacing regulations 6.1 and 6.2 by the texts proposed in paragraphs 74 to 77.

Recommendation No. 2 : The possibility of replacing regulation 3.6 by the texts of the five regulations proposed in paragraphs 79 to 83.

Recommendation No. 3 : The possibility of elucidating regulation 3.7 in accordance with the suggestions made in paragraph 85.

Recommendation No. 4 : The possibility of elucidating regulation 4.4 in accordance with the suggestions made in paragraph 87.



Recommendation No. 5 : The possibility of adopting a preamble to the regulations, perhaps on the basis of the text proposed in paragraph 93.

Recommendation No. 6 : The possibility of drafting rules supplementing the new regulations proposed in this report, as explained in paragraphs 76, 84, 86 and 88.

Recommendation No. 7 : The possibility of combining the financial regulations and the planning regulations, as explained in paragraph 89.

Recommendation No. 8 : The organization, in the Secretariat, of a consultation with those responsible for programme implementation, for the purposes of formulation of the final text of the rules, as described in paragraph 94.

ANNEX

Breakdown of the major programmes of the United Nations into programmes and subprogrammes  
Number of Professional staff members assigned to them

Major programmes	Central prog.	Central subprog.	Regional prog.	Regional subprog.	Total prog.	Total subprog.	Number of professionals		Total
							Central prog.	Regional prog.	
Political and Security Council affairs	2	8	-	-	2	8	108	-	108
Special political affairs	1	3	-	-	1	3	19	-	19
International justice and law	5	21	-	-	5	21	60	-	60
Trusteeship and decolonisation	3	9	-	-	3	9	60	-	60
Disaster relief	1	4	-	-	1	4	24	-	24
Human rights	1	4	-	-	1	4	48	-	48
International drug control	2	8	-	-	2	8	33	-	33
International protection of and assistance to refugees	2	10	-	-	2	10	473	-	473
Public information	1	4	-	-	1	4	227	-	227
Development issues and policy	9	11	5	19	7	30	88	186	274
Energy	2	5	5	13	7	18	23	32	55
Environment	1	10	5	8	6	18	48	26	74
Food and agriculture	1	1	5	12	6	13	16	60	76
Human settlements	1	8	5	17	6	25	90	34	124
Industrial development	3	13	5	12	8	25	328	66	394
International trade	9	19	5	21	14	40	156	88	244
Natural resources	2	7	5	12	7	19	11	48	59
Population	2	9	4	14	6	23	55	78	133
Public administration and finance	1	5	2	4	3	9	24	11	35
Science and technology	2	7	5	13	7	20	36	18	54
Social development	1	11	4	9	5	20	58	46	104
Statistics	2	8	5	13	7	21	97	60	157
Transnational corporations	1	3	-	-	1	3	37	13	50
Transport	2	6	5	26	7	32	22	61	83
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>2 141</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>2 988</b>